

**Written Testimony of Representative Tim Walz (MN-1)**  
**Make It in America: What's Next?**  
**PANEL 2: Skills Training for the Future**

**Intro:**

We've come a long ways since the days of the great recession, and we're proving we can make things in America again.

While our economy is booming, I'm here today to discuss some of the issues that are facing my district that could slow down progress if they're not addressed—workforce development and affordable housing.

**Workforce development:**

Minnesota's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District is ahead of the curve. We actually have too many jobs. So many, that we can't fill them all in some places.

While this is certainly a good problem to have, it is indeed a problem that we need to find solutions to. My district has over 100 diverse manufactures.

From Fastenal in Winona, to AGOC in Worthington, to Angies Kettle Corn in Mankato, the state of Minnesota can "make it."

That isn't the problem.

The problem is workforce development. By the year 2025, it is projected that there will be two million vacant manufacturing jobs in this country, and we need to ensure we have the skilled, trained workforce necessary to fill these positions.

Lots of folks don't know this, but it is just as cheap to make goods here in the US as it is in China. For every dollar it costs to make something here at home, it's 96 cents in China, and this doesn't factor in transportation costs or intellectual property rights which would put the US on top.

Outsourcing today is but a symptom of the underlying problem. We do not have the labor force at the ready to fill these highly skilled positions.

We need start rethinking asking our students to only consider 4 year degrees.

We need welders, electricians, and mechanics—all noble, honorable professions.

Many high schools are cutting shop class—this is a mistake; let's ask that shop, wood crafting, mechanic and other vocational classes be added back in as high school electives.

These types of jobs can provide them with a middle class wage, benefits, stock options, and more.

Additionally, we need to work with our veterans to certify them and connect them with employers. There's no reason why a soldier who has served in Iraq as a driver needs to go through an arduous certification process to become a driver of an 18-wheeler. It just makes sense, and I'm glad to see a bevy of bills out there which address this problem. Now, we just have to get many of them moving in Congress.

I believe strongly that we must find innovative ways to encourage our next generation to build careers in these fields and be ready to fill these vacancies when they are open.

### **Affordable Housing:**

With an increased workforce, comes with an increased need for affordable housing.

When I talk about affordable housing, I mean housing for the working a middle class.

Housing costs are the single biggest expenditure in family budgets.

Even though the housing market has returned, Congress has failed in renewing and funding programs that help insure these types of houses are being built.

Some communities in my district have less than 1% vacancy rates in the workforce housing stock. This lack of housing is eating up family's budgets that could be spent in the community spurring economic growth.

Instead, they're falling behind in pursuing the American Dream.

Workforce Development and Workforce Housing need to go hand in hand order to keep our country moving forward.

### **Conclusion:**

America is making things again and we've proven the way forward is to invest in middle out, not the top down. Minnesota is a prime example of that. We have too many jobs.

The only way we will slow down is if fail to develop the workforce necessary to fill these positions and we fail to provide affordable housing in these local communities.

Let's work together to find solutions to these problems and keep our country moving forward.